

Scale, Citrix VDI for a 1:1 Student/Computer Ratio



INDIANA CHARTER SCHOOL ORGANIZATION'S VIRTUALIZATION PROJECT CUTS COSTS AND BENEFITS STUDENTS



Based in Indianapolis, Ind., The Greater Educational Opportunities Foundation (GEO Foundation) has worked statewide to improve public education since 1998. Specifically, GEO helped foster support for Indiana's current charter school law and now sponsors three charter schools in the state, as well as in Colorado – totaling more than 1,300 students. In addition, GEO operates a statewide tutoring program and its Charter School Service Center assists other leaders in establishing and operating their charter schools.

As GEO grew larger, its computing infrastructure strained to keep up with demands. GEO was faced with supporting multiple schools and server farms, growing storage needs with expensive cooling requirements, and the glaring issue of desktop backups becoming more difficult and expensive every year. Desktop upgrades were another extreme challenge. The desktop upgrade system cost GEO more than \$75,000 per school every four to five years for the desktops alone.

In light of these costs and complexity, GEO decided to implement a new infrastructure and desktop replacement system. GEO broke the project into three phases:

- 1) Buy and install the required storage and networking equipment and integrate with current IT infrastructure
- 2) Virtualize current servers and reallocate hardware; even retiring some servers
- 3) Deploy desktop virtualization

SOLUTION

With a grant budget of \$6,500 per school -- totaling \$19,500 for the three Indiana schools -- the GEO Foundation began searching for a good solution for their upgrade project. They were looking for a storage solution to handle their growing needs without migrating data or disrupting services, while also looking for a virtualization offering that would allow them to make more efficient use of server resources, assist in disaster recovery and centralize server administration. Even more importantly, they sought an offering that would enable them to deploy desktop virtualization. Citrix Systems, Inc. became the most logical and cost-effective choice for their virtualization needs with their family of products and services that could be easily integrated into GEO's existing Citrix XenServer™ environment.

Citrix XenServer is the only enterprise-class, cloud-proven server virtualization platform that delivers the critical features of live migration and centralized multi-server management at no cost. XenServer is an open and powerful server virtualization solution that radically reduces datacenter costs by transforming static and complex datacenter environments into more dynamic, easy to manage IT service delivery centers.

For their storage issues, the GEO Foundation began looking at solutions from Hewlett-Packard and Dell. They came close to placing an order for HP LeftHand™ when they learned about Scale Computing. GEO realized that Scale Computing offered the best all-around solution for their needs and would save them a tremendous amount of money.

“We were extremely excited to come across Scale Computing, as their solutions were exactly what we were looking for, at a price point well below what we had expected,” said Brian Beck, CIO, GEO Foundation. “Scale’s entry price is comparable to the most basic systems, yet its ability to grow over time exceeds that of even the most complex solutions, which is something we looked for as we expand. Of our budgeted \$6,500 per school, we only spent \$1,600, leaving close to \$15,000 to be allocated into other projects that benefit the students.”



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Scale Computing provides highly scalable, modular and migrationless storage systems based on their Intelligent Clustered Storage™ (ICS) technology. Deployed on a commodity hardware platform, Scale storage clusters grow seamlessly from as little as 3 terabytes (TB) to more than 2.2 petabytes (PB), in increments as small as 1 TB at a time. The result: IT managers, with little or no technical expertise, can scale storage like kids build a wall of Legos - simply plugging in another node with no reconfiguration, administration or compromising network speed. And all of this scalability and power costs 50-70 percent less than both cloud services and competitive enterprise storage products.

BENEFITS

By combining storage solutions from Scale and virtualization products from Citrix, the GEO Foundation immediately saw tangible results and cost-savings. In a little over one month, GEO was able to transition all of their storage onto Scale solutions, virtualize six existing servers and even retire five other existing servers – all at just one of GEO’s schools. They have also been able to condense their data to a single backup repository on Scale storage. Overall, they have retired and/or repurposed 14 servers - resulting in more than \$60,000 in savings in just one month.

“The upgrade has been smoother and saved us more money than we had planned,” said Beck. “We were able to save a lot of time with setup, free up a great amount of server space and reduce cooling and electric costs, all without our users ever missing a moment of productivity. We’ve already seen our investment pay for itself.”

With Scale and Citrix solutions in place, GEO has already begun the third phase of its upgrade project: deploying thin client workstations. Because of the initial cost savings GEO has seen, they are now able to service their students on a 1:1 computer-to-student ratio. Previously, they only had budget for one computer for every four students.

“When we began this project, we had no idea that we were going to be able to provide every student their own computer – something that is nearly unheard of,” said Kevin Teasley, President and CEO, GEO Foundation. “In this scenario, a back-end server room technology directly translated into more technology in the hands of students. It’s quite an amazing story.”

FUTURE PLANS

The GEO Foundation plans to continue using solutions from Scale Computing and Citrix as they work to finish the third phase of their upgrade project. GEO will begin to utilize Citrix XenApp™ to help with the desktop virtualization, enabling them to improve application management by centralizing applications, ultimately reducing costs and delivering applications instantly to users anywhere. By deploying thin clients, GEO expects tremendous performance boosts for their users. Thin clients will also save GEO thousands of dollars by dispensing with costly desktop replacements.

“Scale and Citrix have made it possible to realize the true benefits of server and desktop virtualization,” said Beck. “Nearly all other storage offerings would have made it cheaper to just keep buying replacement desktops, costing us well over \$75,000 per school every 4 to 5 years. But with Scale’s cost-effective storage, combined with Citrix’s unmatched family of virtualization products, not only does our IT staff benefit from lower costs and greater ease of manageability, but our students are the real winners. We could have never asked for a better scenario.”

For more information about Scale Computing, please visit www.scalecomputing.com. For more information about Citrix Systems, Inc., please visit www.citrix.com.



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